



PRIME MINISTER

78/95

STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING MP SENATOR ALSTON'S ATTACK ON MY WIFE

Senator Alston's attack on my wife, Annita, over her role as the patron of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's European tour exposes the low, vindictive quality of Liberal Party politics. It is a churlish smear - the hallmark of the modern Liberal Party.

My wife was invited to accompany the orchestra on its first European tour in 20 years; to act as its patron on the tour, and thereby to promote the tour, the orchestra and Australia. She is proud to be able to assist the orchestra in this way - just as the management of the orchestra is delighted that she is able to accompany them in her official capacity as the Prime Minister's wife.

During the tour, Annita will do all she can to promote the orchestra, through publicity, by attending formal receptions for the orchestra, and by attending, and sometimes introducing, concerts.

Her role on this tour will be similar to her role as a Government representative at the Barcelona Olympics, and her role as an advocate for the Sydney Olympic bid at Monte Carlo.

That Senator Alston should have used my wife's involvement in this important cultural project to attack her - and through her, me - is typically sleazy. As the Shadow Minister for Communications and the Arts, he should hang his head in shame. His leader, John Howard, should dissociate himself from Alston's tactics and rebuke him, or stand accused of condoning him.

Contrary to today's breathless account in The Sydney Morning Herald, no \$1,000-a-night hotel rooms and no \$4,000 limousines have been booked. Any costs associated with Mrs Keating's official travel will be duly collated and tabled in Parliament in the usual manner for all such travel by Federal Government representatives. In answer to one of Senator Alston's insulting questions: Mrs Keating will not receive a cent of remuneration for her work as a cultural ambassador on the tour.

I would have hoped The Sydney Morning Herald would have displayed more support for such an exciting and challenging tour by this great Sydney and Australian cultural institution.

**CANBERRA
9 AUGUST, 1995**